Soviet Party Rebuffed In City, Regional Vote

Moscow Orders Tighter Security in Lithuania

By Michael Dobbs
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, March 19—Independent political groups ousted the Communist Party apparatus from power in Moscow and Leningrad today in local elections that also brought victory to secessionist movements in the Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia and strong legislative gains by popular opposition forces in the Soviet Slavic heartland.

The widespread success of nationalist and radical reformist candidates came as Lithuania formally notified President Mikhail Gorbachev that it would not renounce its week-old declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev had given Lithuania until today to reply to a resolution by the Soviet legislature declaring the Lithuanian breakaway move invalid and unconstitutional.

The official news agency Tass reported tonight that the Kremlin leadership had ordered Soviet officials to ensure the security of state-run factories and other installations in Lithuania, a move apparently designed to prevent Lithuanian leaders from carrying out their declared intention of taking full control of government property. The report said that the number of guards would be increased at nuclear plants and other sensitive installations in Lithuania and that Soviet civil authorities had been instructed to guarantee the continuous functioning of transportation and communications lines in the republic.

[In Washington, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said that the United States is monitoring Soviet troop movements in Lithuania, adding that the Bush administration is unsure of Soviet "intentions and purposes" there. A Pentagon intelligence official said the administration did not see the troop movements as the beginning of a crisis. Details on Page A25.]

In Lithuania, meanwhile, President Vytautas Landsbergis reacted